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SUBJECT: UN SECURITY COUNCIL REVIEWS LIBERIA SANCTIONS

REF: STATE 173923

¶1. The UN Security Council, per resolution 1689, reviewed Liberia sanctions during a closed meeting October 20. Danish PermRep Ellen Loj (Chairman of the Liberia Sanctions Committee) delivered a summary of committee discussions and the views of the Panel of Experts, which monitors sanctions implementation (remarks emailed to IO/PSC and AF/W). All Council members applauded the passage of important forestry legislation called for in resolution 1689, and urged the Liberian government to implement the new law to ensure transparency and accountability in the timber sector.

¶2. Council members also agreed that although Liberia had made progress reforming the diamond sector, it had not yet met the criteria for lifting of the diamond sanctions. The Ghanaian PermRep pointed out that mining continues despite the moratorium, and all Council members stressed the need for effective internal controls in the rough diamond trade. Ambassador Bolton noted that the United States provides both financial and technical assistance to help Liberia implement diamond sector reforms. He said the U.S. hopes the Security Council can lift diamond sanctions as soon as possible so that revenues from the sector can benefit the Liberian people. At the conclusion of the consultations, the Security Council agreed to issue a press statement (see paragraph three.) The Security Council will review again the diamond ban in December 2006.

¶3. BEGIN TEXT OF PRESS STATEMENT.

Members of the Security Council today heard a briefing by Ambassador Ellen Loj, Chairman of the Sanctions Committee established by UNSC resolution 1521, and in this connection conducted the reviews called for in resolution 1689 of the Council's decision not to renew the ban on import of all round logs and timber products from Liberia and its decision to renew the ban on imports of rough diamonds from Liberia until December 20 2006.

Members of the Security Council commended the Liberian Legislature for passing legislation, within the 90-day deadline set by resolution 1689, that will ensure a transparent, accountable and government-controlled forestry sector. This important forestry legislation will ensure that revenues from the timber industry will not again fuel conflict. The members acknowledged that the law was signed by President Johnson-Sirleaf on 5 October 2006 and urged the Government of Liberia to bring the law into effect by publishing the required handbills as soon as possible.

Members of the Security Council concluded that there is no basis for reinstating the measures on timber as otherwise stipulated in resolution 1689. They applauded the development of forestry sector reforms by the Government of Liberia and its international partners in the Liberia Forest

Initiative, and called on Liberian authorities to ensure the effective implementation of these reforms and enforcement of the new legislation.

Members of the Security Council were encouraged by the steps Liberia has taken towards meeting the requirements for the lifting of the measures on diamonds. At the same time, they acknowledged the interim findings of the Panel of Experts that more needs to be done for Liberia to establish a Certificate of Origin Regime for export of Liberian rough diamonds.

Members of the Security Council urged the Liberian Government to accelerate the implementation of the necessary reform measures, including stronger management and effective verification and accountability mechanisms, so that Liberia can soon join the Kimberley Process. Concluding, the members expressed their wish to lift the ban on diamonds as soon as possible, so that revenues from the diamond sector can benefit the Liberian people.

Members of the Security Council commended the Panel of Experts on Liberia for their work and look forward to receiving their final report in December.

END TEXT.
BOLTON